



An Interprofessional Approach to Business Planning: A Model of Collaboration

By Cory Ross, Kathleen Alexander, Renata Gritsyuk, Arleen Morrin, and Jackie Tan

Introduction

George Brown College is among the leaders in the interprofessional health-care education movement in Canada. Interprofessional Education (IPE) and Collaborative Practice occur "when students from two or more professions learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes". According to the World Health Organization document (WHO, 2010), Interprofessional education is a necessary step in preparing a collaborative practice-ready health workforce that is better prepared to respond to local health needs. George Brown provides undergraduate and post-graduate training programs for health professionals, community service workers and others including early childhood educators.

For years, educators and practitioners in the health care community have discussed the importance of increasing cooperation, collaboration and teamwork among health care professionals. As far back as the 1980's, the World Health Organization advocated for "multi-professional" education among undergraduate health care students to build "the skills necessary for solving the priority health problems of individuals and communities that are known to be particularly amenable to team-work. The focus has been on styles of learning how to interact with one another". More recent research is demonstrating the important patient care outcomes arising from improvements to health care teamwork (Centre for Health Sciences, George Brown College, 2011). The Division of Community Services and Health Sciences has embedded the IPE principles into our working relationships and have begun sharing and collaborating across the various programs.

Within the Division of Community Services and Health Sciences at George Brown College, we are creating innovative and interactive opportunities to bring together students and faculty of different professions in order to share their perspectives while learning together in areas of common interest in the practice of health care. Our goal is to enable George Brown graduates to be job-ready as successful collaborators and team-players in practice with the ultimate goal of improving our clients lives.

We have established four foundational interprofessional learning outcomes which will enable our students to be trained as skilled team members and better collaborators upon graduation. These outcomes involve developing: (i) a broader understanding and appreciation of the relationship between one's own profession and the background, scope and roles of other healthcare professionals, (ii) team skills, (iii) collaborative skills as a member of a team, and (iv) a broad appreciation for the

organization and ethical issues of the system in which they will work.

To meet these interprofessional learning outcomes, we are developing an exciting array of interprofessional education opportunities for students of all programs. These IPE experiences range on a continuum from collaborative interactive learning with students of other professions in the classroom to applied collaborative practice with students of other professions in simulated and actual clinical situations. The latter includes our on-campus outpatient clinic, our simulated practice centre, and partnerships with health care providers and other professionals in the community such as hospitals, clinics and long term care facilities, in order to provide real-world interprofessional field placements.

In the College system, there are always competing needs for resources. In the Division of Community Services and Health Sciences of George Brown College we have succeeded in embracing the strategic business planning process utilizing the fundamental tenets of interprofessionalism. This paper will illustrate the way in which we place IPE at the forefront of our planning and will reinforce to the reader the richness in professional diversity of our team and consequently the dynamic approach to our very robust business plan.

Methodology

In order to facilitate and foster collaborative planning, we adopted the practice of Appreciative Inquiry in our business planning day. The day was designed to allow for interprofessional dialogue throughout the various inquiry phases: Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny.

The definition of Appreciative Inquiry is: "...the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discover of what gives a system "life" when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to heighten positive potential. It mobilizes inquiry through crafting an "unconditional positive question" often involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people." (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999)

Throughout the literature, it is supported that "in order for collaboration to occur there must be a means of bringing together, valuing and aligning the diversity of experiences, strengths and ideas that will inevitably exist among all the relevant stakeholders" (Anderson, Cooperrider, Gergen, Gergen, McNamee, Watkins, & Whitney, 2008)

List of Attendees:

CSHS Division	Corporate Areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dean• Acting Dean• Associate Dean—Student Success• Academic Director—Health Sciences• Academic Director—Community Services• Academic Director—Early	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Registrar• Financial Controller• Dean of Students• IT Client Services Manager• Educational Resources Director• AVP Institutional

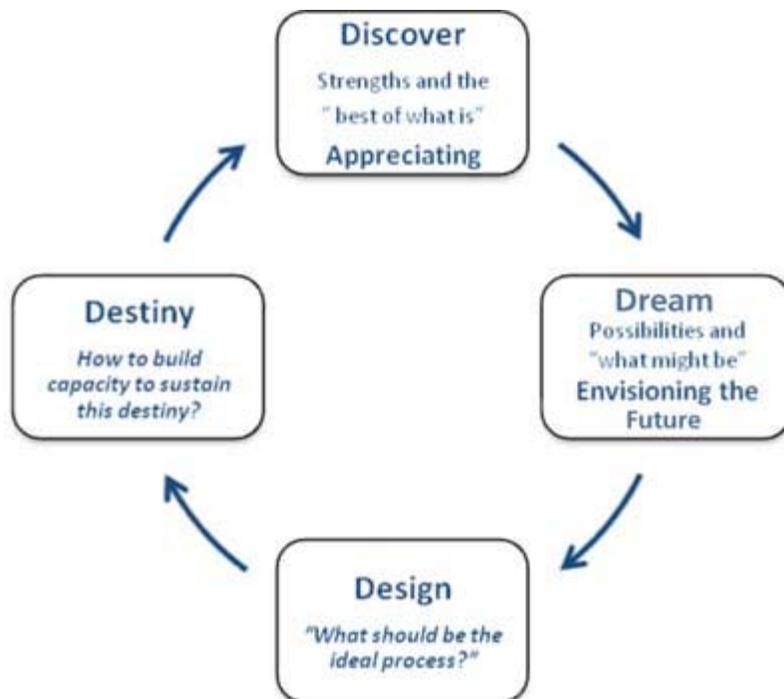
<p>Childhood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Chair—Health Sciences • Academic Chair—Nursing • Academic Chair—Nursing • Academic Chair—Community Services • Operations Manager—Division • Operations Manager—Health Sciences • Operations Manager—Community Services • Operations Manager—Early Childhood • Lab School Manager—Early Childhood • IPE Faculty Coordinator 	<p>Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing Consultant • Foundation Fundraising Manager
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The above group of highly diverse experts was brought together into the process of inquiry and collaborative planning. We worked in small groups in discovering the strengths of our division, dreaming what the possibilities might be, designing the process for the future, and developing a collaborative plan to achieving our destiny.

By the nature of participants and the expertise they bring, one can surmise that our meeting has all the elements of interdisciplinary/interprofessional planning.

The Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle

The following diagram illustrates the A. I. 4 D. cycle:



Adapted from Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle. A facilitator who was well-versed in the A. I. practice was commissioned to guide the group through the A.I. cycle. (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999)

Discussion

As noted, the day was organized in congruence with the practices of A.I. Throughout the 4 stages of the cycle, we were encouraged to explore through our lens of curiosity to understand our successes, strengths, opportunities and possibilities for the future.

1. Discover

- Working in interdisciplinary pairs, we discussed the following key topics:
 - A high point experience at George Brown College (GBC) in the last year
 - What made it a high point experience?
 - What are the best qualities or strengths of GBC that we would want to build on as we develop objectives for the new planning year?
 - One wish for the planning of next year's objectives
- We shared in small groups of 6 – 8, the best qualities or strengths to develop next year's objectives
- We identified the common themes, and shared our wishes for the new year
- We reported them to the big group and identified the themes

2. Dream - Inspirations and Possibilities

- In small interdisciplinary groups of 6 - 8, we discussed:
 - What inspires us about the vision of GBC?
 - What do we see as the possibilities for GBC in 2010, based on the vision?
- We identified the common themes, and shared our vision of GBC

3. Design – Make it Happen!

- After we determined the group's vision of GBC future, the group worked together to identify and define the objectives and outcomes of the coming year business plans.

4. Destiny - Collaborating as we go forward

- Thereafter, the groups reviewed and identified collaboration opportunities to move forward the key ideas the group had collaboratively developed during the day. Further communication between various partners ensued after the planning day.

Observations

Throughout the day and in follow-up discussions participants identified a number of positive outcomes that are directly related to the utilization of the collaborative business planning approach.

- The sharing of ideas, brainstorming, and direct input from other areas increases the likelihood of buy-in.

The diverse working group format facilitates innovative and collaborative thinking.

- The presence of all relevant stakeholders ensures that potential challenges are identified and support is garnered early in the business planning cycle.
- The appreciative inquiry approach helps group to focus on strengths and avoids the onset of negativity.
- There is a new found respect for the knowledge and expertise inherent in both the corporate and academic areas – skills that often go unnoticed.
- Everyone has an equal voice.
- The detailed planning process with relevant stakeholder input facilitates a streamlined business planning day and process.
- Primarily a business planning working day; brief introduction and update only by directors and corporate invites.
- The discussion tables are structured around the College Strategic Objectives – keeps discussions on topic.
- Departmental goals become academic division, and consequently corporate and college business goals.
- Leave with objectives and goals identified, and a plan for moving forward.

Conclusion

Our Division has committed to design its business practices and plans in a very transparent way utilizing the Interprofessional paradigm. By bringing together the corporate centres with our academic division, we feel that our business plans have been enriched and have sequestered support college-wide. As a cohesive unit, we feel that as we move forward in George Brown College's strategic pursuit of the 2010-2020 vision, our Division is well poised for growth and development that is responsible, attainable and sustainable long term. This example of collaboration College-wide will serve us and the future students of our College well as we aspire and transform our organization into a high performing organization.

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